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The Evening Sun (Baltimore, Maryland) · Mon, Oct 9, 1950 · Page 17
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'Lost History' Restored By Women

A leaf from the pages of Maryland history, written over 300 years ago and lost to Marylanders for 200 of those years, is becoming available once more for those who are interested in the beginnings of their State and country.

With the aid of a gift of $5,000, presented last year to the Maryland Historical Society by the National Society of Daughters of Founders and Patriots of America, the Historical Society is putting into usable form the Calvert papers.

The papers, acquired by the Historical Society in 1888 are from the possession of Col. Frederick Henry Harford, of Down place, England, the great-grandson of the last Lord Baltimore. They consist of nearly a thousand documents, on paper and parchment, dating back to the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, when the Lords Baltimore as "Lord Proprietary of the Provinces of Land" ruled our ancestors.

Oldest Existing Paper

One of the highlights of the collection is the instructions given by Cecilius Calvert to the first colonists who were sailing from England in 1633 on the Ark and the Dove.

This document, the most ancient existing paper dealing with Maryland, shows that the policy of religious toleration, often thought to date only from the Act of 1649, was, in fact, the original intention of the founder.

Other documents have to do with matters of business and government between the colonists and their Lord Proprietary, between him and the Crown.

Could Not Be Touched

All of these documents and the many others in the collection were in fine condition, as 300-year-old documents go, when they were received by the Maryland Historical Society. The only difficulty was that they couldn't be touched or used without falling apart.

They were yellow with age and tearing at the folds and edges. Some of the pages were torn. They were, in short, in no condition to be ruffled through by careful scholars, much less by the public.

As a result of the gift of the Daughters of Founders and Patriots, the Historical Society has made a good start during the past year on restoring the papers to a usable condition, having them bound, and putting them in the library where they may be used.

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May 27, 2025

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